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Mountain Orokaiva

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539 776 177 [535] a victim and Christ's Passion. He also pointed out that by performing this chant, the dancers were sacrificing their bodies to Christ. There was no harm in this performance, he said, because the sentiments in both forms of religion were the same.

Councillor Ase added a more earthy dimension to the pastor's words when he declared that it was Jesus Christ who had given the Papuans the benefit of wage labour. This sentiment might have appealed to Governor Murray. It completes the image of Jesus as *dema*. First, Jesus was killed and gave His body to mankind, or to His followers, by being crucified. His body is still being consumed at Communion services, the deep sacredness of which the Papuans recognise. He also left behind him immense *gifts*: the technology (cargo) of the white man, and money with which men may acquire this cargo. Wage labour is one of the means now open to the Papuans for acquiring at least a little of this money and cargo. Thirdly, like all *dema*, he left behind a set of rules which men have to follow if they are to obtain full access to the particular kind of *ivo* he bequeathed upon mankind.

182 771 776 177 It now becomes a little clearer how the Orokaiva have found a rationale, satisfying to themselves, for the behaviour patterns they are adopting in response to the impact of white power. The coming of the white man is viewed as an event of the same magnitude as the addition of a new *dema* to the pantheon. The most crucial fact about this new *dema* is that it was through his help that the white man obtained extraordinary wealth and power. It was hinted to me from time to time that the white man should have been far more generous in sharing this wealth and power with the Papuans. At the same time, however, it was emphasised that the Orokaiva had already received some substantial benefits, for example the introduction of money, wage labour and cash cropping. My informant the councillor, whose contact with white authority had been somewhat closer than was usual in the district, claimed special knowledge about how European-type power might be obtained. It was on the basis of this knowledge that he felt entitled to advise his people to shift to another village. But his audience did not really believe he knew anything.

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While the councillor's competence was doubted, his basic ideas were generally accepted: Orokaiva progress was thought to depend on the following of prescriptions originating from the *dema* Jesus Christ. The white man had revealed only part of these prescriptions. (In this respect Orokaiva beliefs resembled those reported by Burridge 1960, 1969.) It was thought, moreover, that these rules prescribed ritual acts performed for the first time by Jesus Christ and now imitated by those who are fully initiated in His mysteries. While these Orokaiva beliefs may impede their understanding of the workings of white society, they do provide a rationale for those white behaviour patterns which Orokaiva are able to observe. They also provide a charter for the changes Orokaiva are actually adopting in their exchange system and elsewhere.

177 773 [731] One experience at Hohorita made me aware how closely the introduction of Western culture is identified with the action of traditional *dema*. Due to the death of most of the older men of the Sangara tribe at the time of the eruption, their descendants grew up at Hohorita without much knowledge of myths and traditions. Nonetheless, when I visited the village, a number of men spent several nights with me telling me what they knew. Their information would mostly be

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dismissed by a seeker of ancient lore, but contained some myths of obviously recent vintage which helped me to understand contemporary Orokaiva thought. I was told that before the Europeans came, the Orokaiva used to make only very small gardens. They were in constant danger of starvation and depended greatly on wild fruit. I copied the names of these, but was told that many of them were never eaten nowadays. (Many are inedible.) In those days, people did not make feasts as they did not grow enough food. The large gardens people have at the present time were introduced only when the Europeans brought steel axes and knives.

In other villages I was told similar stories about a primordial state of wretchedness when people cultivated no taro but ate wild fruit now considered inedible. But this period ended when the *dema* introduced the elements of traditional Orokaiva culture. In Hohorita, culture history had become foreshortened. Other Orokaiva distinguished the traditional *dema* stories which occurred in the dim past from the stories concerning the arrival of the Europeans; they recognised in fact *two* periods of fundamental change: one ancient and complete, the other recent and incomplete. In Hohorita tradition, these two periods have to some extent become fused. The premature death of men born between, say, 1890 and 1910 deprived the men of today of any factual knowledge of the coming of the European: it has already been turned into myth and placed, so to speak, *in illo tempore*. But this unusual development only emphasises how closely the gifts of European culture are identified with those of traditional *dema*.

The chairman of the Higaturu Local Government Council, who also happened to live at Hohorita, had long conversations with me about the constitution and activities of the council. On one occasion I wished to discover to what extent the council had been set up in response to popular aspirations and to what extent the councillors (as opposed to the Australian adviser) made decisions on basic policy. Answer: because the government had a council at Rabaul, it decided to have one in the Northern District as well. Did the people want the council? They had been given schools; they had been given coffee to market. They therefore thought the council would also be good. Would it not be better for the people to decide for themselves how their problems should be solved instead of leaving all decision-making to the government? The council did not come from ourselves but from the administration. We do not know about the council. It belongs to the administration and it was given to the village people.

The Department of District Administration had recommended this informant to me as being the most knowledgeable in the district on the subject of the council. I found his knowledge of the facts to be most accurate, and at council meetings he was the only man who dared to argue with the advisory officer. But when I questioned him on the level of social philosophy, he fell back on the standard Orokaiva explanation: power and strength come to us not from things we have invented or made ourselves, but from things that have been given to us by our exchange partners. This is precisely what Councillor Ase said: if the Orokaiva of today desires to have an *ivo* equal to that of his ancestors, he has to follow the instructions of the council, i.e. to build a new village, grow coffee, individualise land titles. This, at the present time, is his best available source of power and strength. In other words, it is not a matter of villagers independently

Foreword

121 This paper is concerned with an experiment initiated in 1964 in
423 the Northern District of Papua in which land previously held under customary tenure has been converted to registered individual title in accordance with the Land (Tenure Conversion) Ordinance 1963. Three main aspects of conversion were examined:

(i) the motivations and expectations of the people at one of the first conversion schemes, Ombi-Tara;

(ii) the effects of conversion on productivity, land use, residence patterns, work organisation, and social life at Ombi-Tara;

(iii) the cost to the government per acre and per block (i.e. farm) of tenure conversion in the Northern District.

127 Much of the data on the costs of conversion was collected from official files. Where recorded information was not available,
124 estimates based on interviews were used. The body of the Ombi-Tara data as set out in Chapters 3 and 4 was gained from personal interviews carried out between 9 January and 11 February 1966. During
122 these periods my assistants and I lived in the single men's house in Ombi village.

124 All males over the age of fifteen resident at Ombi-Tara were
115 interviewed with the exception of one old man. In addition we interviewed two 'outsiders' who have applied for blocks in the Ombi-Tara scheme. One is a man of the main clan at Ombi (Musu) who now lives in a neighbouring village but intends to move to Ombi soon. The other is a Papuan Agricultural Assistant who is stationed at Ombi but whose home village is near Cape Killerton about forty miles away. Interviews were conducted in the local language through interpreters.

128 Interviewing has serious defects. The answers one gets can only be as good as the questions asked. Although we followed up all answers with probes and long, informal discussions, talking is a poor substitute for rigorous and sustained observation over a
[121] period of years. The only justification for using this method is that time was short, and that this paper is intended only as an exploratory attempt to examine the operation of the 1963 land tenure conversion legislation in the only district where it has so far been applied.

I am indebted to the New Guinea Research Unit of the Australian National University for generous financial assistance. I wish to thank the Chief Commissioner of Land Titles (Mr D.J. Kelliher) and members of the Commission in Popondetta and Port Moresby; officers of the Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries in Popondetta, and of the Department of District Administration in Popondetta, who discussed various aspects of the project and assisted me in every possible way; Mr Cromwell Burau, Mr Russell Clarke and Mr Napier Boraba who helped greatly by interpreting both Orokaiva language and culture; Mrs Yvonne McMahon who typed a manuscript which was at times barely legible; and the Ombi-Tara villagers whose warmth, hospitality and enthusiastic co-operation made our stay so enjoyable. Helpful comments on an earlier draft were made by Dr R.G. Crocombe, Mr E.K. Fisk, Mr G.R. Hogbin, Dr R.T. Shand, Mrs S. Faircloth and Mr W. Standish. I am particularly grateful to Dr R.G. Crocombe, Executive Officer of the New Guinea Research Unit, for his advice and encouragement at all stages of the project.

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broader view of the social consequences of the eruption, and therefore included a third village, Hohorita, which lies at the centre of the area most deeply affected by the calamity. Sivepe, lying West of the volcano, escaped the full blast of the explosion; Inonda, to the East, was not directly affected at all, but Hohorita is a village made up of the survivors from Sangara villages situated in the blast area. Hohorita, as well as Kiorota which I visited briefly, has a far larger population than Orokaiva villages normally contain; these people were brought together, as a result of government organisation immediately after the eruption, from more than a dozen of the destroyed villages, comprise more than a dozen clans and constitute a new type of residential unit the origin of which may be directly traced to the eruption. Both Hohorita and Kiorota are situated on land owned by one of the constituent clans. With over 400 inhabitants, they face serious problems of factionalism. The government, which had an active hand in fostering them, had hoped they would solve basic problems of Orokaiva social fragmentation. In fact, one may almost say that the large consolidated village was a principal aim of government planning for the persons displaced by the eruption. Hence, it seems necessary to include consideration of this residential form in the present study.

Of the 12 months spent in the Territory of Papua, my wife and I lived in Orokaiva villages for more than 10 months, dividing the rest of the time between Port Moresby and the administrative centre of Popondetta. Most of the field period was spent in Sivepe, with three weeks in Inonda and five weeks in Hohorita. In Inonda we made use of a house previously used by the New Guinea Research Unit; in Sivepe a village house was built for us while at Hohorita we were squatting in an uncompleted village house--an unsatisfactory arrangement which accounts, in part, for the brevity of our stay. Fortunately, we had extremely competent research assistance at Hohorita, after we stopped residing there. The head teacher, Mr. Harold Heru, prepared extremely good genealogical records, showing residence of matrilateral and affinal kin as well as clan structure and residence.

The basic source of the material that follows are my own field notes. These are supplemented by government records, the publications on the Orokaiva and the eruption published by F. E. Williams, Reay, Belshaw, Keesing, Croccombe, Hogbin, Rimoldi, Waddell. I also collected tape recordings containing 50 basic documents in the Orokaiva language; transcriptions in Orokaiva and translations into English are available. A number of Europeans who were concerned with the administration of the temporary refugee camps were interviewed, including Dr. Gunther, Mr. F. Kaad, Mr. C. Searle, Mr. R. Hart and others too numerous to mention. Miss Nancy White, a mission teacher at Hohorita, apart from giving other help, put at my disposal a valuable collection of her diary notes, important letters written to her and Orokaiva texts collected at the Sasembata mission school in the years 1952 - 1953.

177 husbands of his sisters' daughters, as is customary. Most of all, he
623 was a careful man who put whatever he accumulated to the most prudent
471 use. In his capacity of clan leader and village leader, he controlled two corporate savings accounts, one of $158, the other smaller and secret; people had full confidence that deposits were entirely safe in his care. Though he would never express himself in such terms, he was actually leading his people into a state of solid and (hopefully) economically viable peasantry.

I asked him what he thought were the qualifications of a leader.
177 A leader, he said, must be very smart and understanding, have a lot
623 of garden and make a feast; then the people will join him. They don't appoint him but he stands out by his farming, gardening, feasts. He
[157] is usually an elderly man.

Not only Lawrence, but also all other informants insisted that leadership was not hereditary, even though a leader may desire a certain son to succeed him. After the old leader is dead, the living are free to make their own decision. Lawrence rejected the idea that the councillors are the present leaders of the community. The ancestors, he said, decided what people ought to do. They had talked all this over. Then the "two-bob councillors" came; all they care about is to carry out the government's orders. They don't really direct the people. All the same, Lawrence was well aware of the influence of the councillors. It was when they were established, he said, that the old way of thinking was upset. The village constable did not make important changes, though sometimes people went to jail for some trouble. In spite of these views, Lawrence went to no particular trouble to keep old customs alive; when he entertained Togahou village, there were far fewer ceremonial features than I saw at a feast at Inonda.

As an informant I found him entertaining but of limited useful-
115 ness. He was at first very reluctant, and later allowed himself to be interviewed, using the occasion as a battle of wits. Never once did he tell a direct lie, but his answers were cunningly planned with the intent to mislead. My part of the game was to get at the truth and in this game he was a most ingenious opponent. Sometimes he tried to conceal what seemed to me a most innocuous piece of information; thus, he alerted me to institutions I might otherwise have overlooked. No statement he made could be accepted on its face value. In this he differed from other informants less in intent than in ingenuity.

The other key personalities at the time of my visit were all
123 Jegase. As I had been apportioned to my clan, they were much more
159 helpful with information. They adopted me as a sort of fictional clansman whereas to Lawrence I must have been a fictional affine. My closest associate in the village was actually the son-in-law Lawrence
[559] disliked, Robert, my neighbour. He was a man of about 32 who had most of the qualities admired by the Orokaiva: a fine dancer, with charm, modest bearing, wisdom and foresight in handling social situations and conflicts; he was generous with his possessions and did not importune others for gifts; he was a good gardener, builder and worker, ready

123 to help others; he spoke softly and gently but when necessary could be
554 firm and tough; furthermore, he had a relatively wide experience of
159 the outside world. He had been a hunting leader before this task was transferred to the representative of the church council; he was also a leader in football. He came of a lineage with small land holdings in the Sivepe area, but his father had bought rights to additional holdings (with money Robert had earned) and his mother's brother had given him the use of other blocks Robert will eventually inherit.

159 When we came to the district he had just started his new house and was living, like many others in a small older one he had brought from Old Sivepe. He sold us his new house and stayed in the smaller one until we had gone. Though his house was thus among the most primitive in the village, it attracted more village visitors than any other; Robert and his rather attractive wife were popular. When the woman's club house was to be built, and when Lawrence had given the land, it was Robert to whom the women turned as a work leader. It was also Robert who decided that the work on the village houses and the mission hospital had more urgency (and that the clubhouse had better wait until it had ceased being a pawn in female factionism). Robert went to Port Moresby for a few months after a violent episode in his tumultuous marriage, hoping he would earn enough money to open a trade store.

He had about four years of working experience outside the village, as a houseboy, with the A.P.C. and on road work. Since then it was his ambition to start in business; in the early sixties, Jegase seems to have made some attempt at a trade store with disastrous results. He hoped to do better the next time, but a trade store opened up in an offshoot of Sasembata village just next to Sivepe, so that this is destined to remain a dream. Robert composed several songs over the year, and was constantly practising his drum. People usually waited for him before a dance practise could start, though he was not formally the dance leader. He also managed all the diplomatic maneuvers necessitated by our presence. He did this with great honesty; I [123] could always rely on all he said. Indeed, if it had not been for him [145] and his father, I wonder whether I could have come to grips with Sivepe at all. He also piloted us through the maze of the Orokaiva exchange system. He was the only person who never imposed on us, never asked for gifts. There was perhaps some calculation in this, as we were more disposed to respond to generosity than to the sharp trading engaged in by some others.

He had stood as a candidate for the council two years earlier but had been defeated, partly due to opposition from his affines. His first formal leadership role (apart from hunting and football) was as representative for Sivepe on the land adjudication committee. His father-in-law would have been better qualified, as he knew the land boundaries better, but he could not hold both committee posts simultaneously. It was interesting to see that in this situation, where the